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THE WRECK MASTER.

He Does Some Tall Hustling When the Line Is Blocked.

When a wreck blocks the line the wreck master is the biggest man on the railroad. Even the president, if by unhappy chance he happens to be there, steps aside and keeps silent after the wreck train halts with a jerk of grinding brakes and hissing air before the indescribable confusion of shattered wood and twisted steel which clutter the tracks. The wreck master's feet are on the ground before the shrieking wheels have ceased turning. There follow at his heels a half score of men, all experts, but of less degree than their leader.

He shouts an order that seems as unintelligible as a drillmaster's command, then another and another. There is instant action. At one end of the train a locomotive begins to creep cautiously away with the coaches that have stayed on the rails. An express car up toward the forward end of the passenger train is tilted tremblingly on its trucks. It is loaded with bales of silk perhaps or with other costly merchandise. The wreckers do not stop to inquire. To them it is simply an obstruction that has to be removed immediately. There is a heaving chorus, and it plunges down the embankment. A hundred yards away a loaded freight car in the opposite train is hanging over the edge. Fifty crowbars give it a tip that sends it down to the foot of the hill. As it lands there is a crash of discordant, tortured strings, an inharmonious outburst as though half a hundred cats had landed simultaneously on half a hundred keyboards. "Pianos," remarks one of the panting workmen to another standing at his shoulder. They do not pause even to grin. An instant later they are heaving away at something else.—Thaddeus S. Dayton in Harper's Weekly.

CHINA'S GREAT WALL.

It Would Be a Mighty Task to Duplicate It Today.

What man has done, we are told, man can do. But to erect today a great fortification comparable to the Great wall of China would be a heavy tax on both the resources and the resolution of Europe. A score or two of warships are all very well, but the cost of labor and the will involved in building fleets can hardly be compared to those devoted to the building of that great barrier about two centuries before the coming of Christ, when Rome was struggling with Hannibal.

Two thousand five hundred and fifty miles, including spurs, arms and loops, is the length ascribed to it by Dr. W. E. Geil, the only white man, we believe, who has traveled the whole length of it. It has been said that the Great wall is the only object of man's handiwork which could be discerned from the moon, and one calculation has it that if the material of the wall were disposed about the globe at the equator there would be a wall girdle eight feet high and three feet thick around the earth.

One can believe that to this day the name of the Emperor Chin is cursed all along the wall by the posterity of the wretches who were forced to the gigantic task of building it. In the days of its greatest importance, when it was still holding back the Tartar hordes, it is believed to have had on its line 25,000 towers, each capable of holding 100 men, and 15,000 watchtowers. Even today there remains 20,000 towers and 10,000 watchtowers, with some 2,000 miles of wall that could, with moderate repairing, be made into a formidable military work.—London News.

Giants and Dwarfs.

In the seventeenth century all the abnormally large and small folks of Austria were assembled in Vienna in response to a whim of the empress. As circumstances required that all should be housed in one building, there was a fear that the imposing proportions of the giants would terrify the dwarfs. But the dwarfs teased and tormented the giants so that these overgrown mortals complained with tears in their eyes, and as a consequence sentinels had to be placed to protect the giants from their pygmy persecutors, for the smallest men had the biggest brains and the longest tongues.

Witness My Hand.

In the early days only a few scholars knew how to write. It was then customary to sign a document by smearing the hand with ink and impressing it upon the paper, accompanied by the words, "Witness my hand." Afterward the seal was introduced as a substitute for the hand mark and was used with the words above quoted, the two forming the signature. This is the origin of the expression as used in modern documents.

The Nearest He Ever Came to It.

"Colonel," she asked, "have you ever been up in a balloon?"

"No," he answered, "but I got to talking art to a Boston lady once, and she had me away up in the air inside of two minutes."—Exchange.

CAUTION IN THE MINT.

They Almost Strain the Air to Save Particles of Gold.

It has been aptly said that no miser guards his treasure more religiously than Uncle Sam watches over the precious metals that pass through his mints. Then, too, the precautions against waste are almost innumerable.

Every evening in each of the mints of the United States the floors of the melting rooms are swept cleaner than a New England housewife's kitchen. The dust is carefully put aside, and about once in two months the soot scraped from every flue is transferred to the same precious dust heap. This is then burned, and from its ashes the government derives no inconsiderable income. The earthenware crucibles used in melting are employed no more than three times. They are crushed beneath heavy rollers, and in their porous sides are found flakes of the precious metal.

In the melting room when the casters raise their ladles from the melting pots a shower of sparks fly from the molten surface of the metal. For the most part they are bits of incandescent carbon, but clinging to the carbon is often a minute particle of metal. Lest such particles should escape, the ashes and clinkers below the furnaces are gathered up at night. This debris is ground into powder by means of a steam crusher and then is sold to a smelter, like ordinary ore, at a price warranted by the assayer.

The ladles that stir the precious metal, the big iron rods, the strainers and the dippers, all are tested in a most curious fashion. After considerable use they become covered with a thin layer of oxidized silver, closely resembling a brown rust. The implements are then laid in baths of a solution of sulphuric acid, which eats away the iron and steel and leaves the silver untouched.

Gradually the ladle, or whatever the implement is, will disappear, and in its place remains a hollow silver counterpart of the original, delicate as spung glass. These fragile casts reproduce the ladle with perfect accuracy in all its details, although their surfaces are perforated with innumerable little holes. Scarcely have they been molded, however, before they are cast into a crucible to become in time dollars, quarters and dimes.

In one corner of the melting room there is a large tank into which newly cast silver bars are dropped and left to cool. Infinitesimal flakes of silver scale off and rise to the surface of the water, which acquires the metallic luster of a stagnant pool. Here is silver that must not be lost, so beneath the pipe through which the tank is emptied is banked a thick layer of mud. As the water filters through it the mud retains the precious residuum. Four times a year this mud is removed, and each experiment discloses the fact that some $50 has been saved.—Baltimore American.

His Text.

The three-year-old son of a Methodist minister was with his mother at a gathering of ladies. At the proper time he was given a cooky. He ate it in short order and asked for another. The hostess said:

"I'll give you another if you will sing for us."

"Can't sing," was his reply, "but I know something I can say."

"That will do all right," the lady answered, expecting to hear "Twinkle, twinkle, little star," or some other nursery classic.

But the little fellow drew himself up in real Sunday school fashion and said his piece:

"God loveth a cheerful giver."

The lady gave him the cooky, and the whole company seemed to be very cheerful about it.—Harper's Magazine.

A Water Telescope.

Norwegian fishermen use a water telescope to ascertain the position of the herring shoals. This is the way to make the water telescope:

Procure a tube made of tin and funnel shaped about three and a half feet long and ten inches in diameter at the largest end. It should be wide enough at the top to take in the observer's eyes, and the inside should be painted black. At the bottom, or wide end, a clear, thick piece of glass must be inserted, with a little lead in the form of a ring to weight the tube. When the instrument is immersed in clear water it is astonishing how many fathoms down the observer can see.

The Sybarites.

The Sybarites were the inhabitants of the ancient city of Sybaris, in southern Italy, founded 720 B. C. They were so greatly addicted to voluptuousness and self indulgence that their name became a byword among the peoples of antiquity. The word "sybarite" is used at the present day to denote a person devoted to luxury and pleasure.

One More Disappointment.

"Poor old Myer is dead, I see. He led a life full of disappointments."

"How glad he would have been to see his name in print!"—Fliegende Blatter.